DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 076 646 TM 002 651

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TITLE	Program Evaluation as an Administrative Concept.
PUB DATE	28 Feb 73
NOTE	14p.; Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Meeting (New Orleans, Louisiana, February 25-March 1, 1973)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Role; *Decision Making; *Educational Objectives; *Evaluation Techniques; *Program Evaluation; Speeches

ABSTRACT

How do the various ideas currently used in conceptualizing and modeling evaluation relate to the administrator? How can he best use them in guiding his institution in evaluation? This paper summarizes some of the major trends of thought related to evaluation and explores them from an administrative rather than from a research or instructional point of view. It presents a framework and discusses some of the issues involved in program evaluation in educational institutions. (Author)

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PROGRAM EVALUATION AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE CONCEPT

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A new type of evaluation, *program evaluation*, is beginning to take shape in education literature. It hasn't yet emerged as distinct and fully described phenomena. Whether it is a sub-category within *educational evaluation* or whether it is a parallel category is not yet clear. What is abundantly clear, however, is that many of the newer conceptualizations of evaluation are not talking about the same things. For example, Stufflebeam (1968) is discussing quite different evaluation than is Scriven (1972).

Although new to the literature and perhaps not present in practioner jargon, program evaluation is not new in the actual practice of education. Program evaluation comprises a major part of the work of principals, superintendents, curriculum specialists, department chairmen and team leaders. It is an important element in the work of teachers who have choice in terms of what they emphasize and how they allocate resources among aspects taught. In keeping with the 15 minute time limit, this is a condensed version of the original paper. Main points are listed but not developed. The objectives of the study and paper are:

*To briefly summarize some of the key ideas in recent writings on program evaluation which may be relevant to the administrator.

*To present a concept of program evaluation in an administrative as opposed to an instructional or research context.

*To identify issues related to further developing and operationalizing an administrative concept of evaluation.

Paper developed for AERA Annual Meeting, February 28, 1973, New Orleans

Experiences contributing to this paper include:

*Search of the literature for the past six years as input into a graduate level course on evaluation of Extension programs.

*Interaction with students; interaction with programmers and administrators in Extension.

*Participation in the AERA workshop last fall on alternative conceptualizations of evaluation.

*Preparation of a manuscript for Syracuse ERIC in which I attempted to summarize and classify recent frameworks or approaches to evaluation (Steele, 1973).

Limitations in the paper's usefulness to you:

*My field is adult education. I have no contact with elementary or secondary school systems. Therefore my perceptions of how these ideas fit your field may not be accurate.

*I am not an administrator, nor do I teach and research administration. Therefore, this paper comes not from within your own group, but from an outside observer.

*The paper is a piecing together of things which others may see as unrelated to each other. It is more of a synthesis than it is an analysis of others' views of program evaluation.

The paper includes the following main parts:

*The pieces which are fitting together to create a concept of program evaluation.

*A beginning attempt to define what program evaluation is and what it is not.

*The relationship of program evaluation to administration.

*Recommendations for further development and operationalization of program evaluation as an administrative concept.

Factors and Ideas Contributing to a Concept of Program Evaluation

Evaluation as a concept in education literature has experienced the following stages in development:

*Evaluation was synonomous with measurement and was only concerned with evaluating student performance for grading and other purposes (Guba, 1969).

*Objectives became the focal point for measuring student performance.

*Attainment of objectives then became the main means of evaluating the results of instruction and of curriculum (Tyler, 1950).

*Attempts were made to include variables affecting results in models of evaluation (Taba and Sawin, 1962; Hammond, 1967).

Considerable pressure was put on evaluation during the middle sixties and prevailing concepts were found wanting (Guba, 1969; Glass, 1972). As a result more literature on evaluation has been produced and more different ideas about evaluation has been presented in the past eight years than in the previous fifty years.

Factors that have recently emerged or taken on new perspectives and that are relevant to the developing concept of program evaluation include:

*The term *program* is becoming more common in education as a result of its use in PPBS--program planning budgeting system--programmed instruction, and programs developed through R and D centers.

*Theory and concepts of operational research and managerial science have spread to education. For example, the concepts of *system* and *management of systems* is more widespread.

*With pressures for relevance and taxpayers' revolts, *assessments of attitudes* toward educational programs and their results are deemed as important parts of evaluation.

*Distance between the source of funds and the local school (ie, the amount funneled to the federal treasury and then back to the local school system) has introduced a concept of *accountability* that goes beyond accountability to a local school board.

*Whether considered within prior definitions of evaluation or not, the evaluative activities involved in *accredition* and *on-site inspections* by the State Department of Instruction have had to continue.

**Administrative decisions* became much more complex as school systems trebled in size over recent years.

Curriculum decisions have become much more complex with the "knowledge explosion" and the challenges of preparing young people to take their place in the complex and sophisticated America of the future. Educational decisions are much more difficult than they were thirty years ago.

Greater attention is being paid and there is more conflict generated today in terms of the ultimate goals in education.

Instructional objectives and *institutional goals*, the micro and the macro levels, have emerged as specialized fields within the literature. How the two relate to each other is less clear. More attention is beginning to be paid to *hierarchies and networks of objectives* and goals.

Recent ideas about evaluation which have particular relevance to program evaluation include:

Evaluation as input into *decision making*. The purpose of evaluation is to improve rather than prove (Phi Delta Kappa, 1970).

Four types of decisions with corresponding types of evaluation--context, input, process and product (Ph Delta Kappa, 1971).

Formative evaluation as different from summative evaluation (Scriven, 1967).

Evaluation's contribution at *all stages of program development* (Provus, 1971; Lindvall and Cox, 1970; Tripodi, Fellin, and Epstein, 1971).

The act of *judgment* as an essential part of evaluation (Stake, 1967).

Criteria as essential elements in evaluation (Herzog, 1959; Suchman, 1967; Phi Delta Kappa, 1971).

Kinds of *criteria categories* to be used in examining programs. For example, adequacy of effort, effectiveness, efficiency (Suchman, 1967; Tripodi, Fellin and Epstein, 1971).

Institutional evaluation as being something more than course evaluation (Forehand, 1970).

Reductionism--testing the pieces of the clock separately doesn't mean that the clock will run (Hawkridge, 1970).

In addition to meeting traditional scientific criteria, validity, reliability and objectivity, evaluation should meet the practical criteria of relevance, importance, scope, creditability, timeliness, and pervasiveness (Phi Delta Kappa, 1971).

Evaluation should meet the prudential criteria of efficiency (Phi Delta Kappa, 1971). It must balance benefits with costs of evaluation.

*Similarities and differences in evaluation and research (Hemphill, 1969; Glass and Worthen, 1972).

*Judging the results of the program against the intitating need (Scriven, 1972), the mission of the unit and the intent of the particular kind of education, ie., developmental, problem solving mastery of content, etc. (Steele, 1972).

*Program as a productive system with inputs, processes, and outputs (Alkin, 1967; Stake, 1967).

*Evaluation as comparing more than one means of attaining the same end (Scriven, 1972; Stufflebeam, 1972).

*Responsibility for accountability and good stewardship of resources used (Browder, 1971).

*Consideration of both real and opportunity costs and of both private and social benefits in cost-benefit analysis.

*Trade offs as an important and realistic concept in evaluation (Glass, 1972).

*Importance of involving people in setting standards, interpreting data, and developing conclusions (Verduin, 1967; Byram and Robinson, 1970; Rippey, 1972).

*Evaluation as management methodology (Lange, 1970).

*The relationship of education to social policy (Berlack, 1970) of evaluation and politics (Cohen, 1970; Eash, 1972) and of evaluation and social policy (Freeman and Sherwood, 1970; Provus, 1972)

Few of the above concepts come out of a discussion of program evaluation per se, but each contributes to the piecing together of a concept of program evaluation.

What is Program Evaluation?

Definitions of *evaluation* that are particularly relevant in formulating a concept of program evaluation include:

*Evaluation is the systematic process of judging the worth, desirability, effectiveness, or adequacy of something according to definite criteria and purposes. The judgement is based on a careful comparison of observation data with criteria standards. Precise definitions of what is to be appraised, clearly stated purposes, specific standards for the criteria traits, accurate observations and measurements, and logical conclusions are the hallmarks of valid evaluation (Harris, 1968).

*Social program evaluation is the systematic accumulation of facts for providing information about the achievement of program requisites and goals relative to efforts, effectiveness, and efficiency within any stage of program development. The factors of evaluation may be obtained through a variety of relatively systematic techniques, and they are incorporated into some designated system of values for making decisions about social program (Tripodi, Fellin and Epstein, 1971).

*Evaluation is quality control of the processes and outcomes of an educational program (Gottman and Clasen, 1972).

*Evaluation is the process of using information and criteria in judging decision alternatives. Adaptation of Phi Delta Kappa, 1972.

(This adaptation is made to take the definition from the world of the professor-researcher whose role is that of providing information and transfer it to the world of the administrator whose role is that of using evaluative information in making decisions.)

Program evaluation is not:

*The same thing as instructional evaluation.

*Only examining the results of programs--attainment of objectives or other indicators of results.

*The same thing as program research or evaluative research.

*The same thing as accountability.

*The same thing as systems analysis.

Program evaluation can be described as:

*Focusing on macro-levels but also being concerned with how each unit fits into a course, each course fits into a curricula, each curricula fits into the total program of a school, the program of each school fits into the total of life-long education.

*Recognizing that good evaluation during formative stages results in a greater chance of formative evaluation showing expected outcomes.

*A generic process including a variety of foci, strategies, and evaluation approaches and techniques.

*Essentially being a process of forming judgements by using criteria and/or decision alternatives and evidence germane to the criteria or key discriminating factors.

*Primarily concerned with improving decisions and improving education through facilitating better decisions.

*Concerned with the extent to which the mission and institutional goals of the school system and of education are being met.

*Concerned with the way in which resources (of the child, the teacher, support personnel, the school district, and society) are being used in the process of education.

*Concerned with underlying value questions and issues that affect educational decisions.

*Focusing on education as a system made up of parts.

*Concerned with the way that various parts of the educational system function together in facilitating education.

*Concerned with the quality and accuracy of program decisions throughout the total educational process.

*Concerned with quality and accuracy of choice among alternatives at the program level as to (a) who will receive what kinds of education, (b) what will be taught, (c) how it will be taught, (d) what level of performance will be expected.

*Recognizing that programs should be judged on more than one set of criteria. For example, suitability, quality, and efficiency need to be considered as well as effectiveness.

*Examining the addative effect of several courses in a curriculum area or several years of schooling.

*The prerogative of those who are intimately involved with the program--teachers, administrators, students, parents, and the local community.

*Sometimes being facilitated by outside experts, but because the decisions lie within the school system, the bulk of the evaluation must be done within that system.

*Examining the relationship of the program to community and societal context. Is it relevant to real life needs?

*Concerned with totals and wholes rather than independent parts standing in isolation to each other.

*Drawing both on scientifically processed data and upon wisdom built through human experience, and knowing when each is appropriate.

*Identifying and dealing with the most imperative trade offs.

*Able to identify the difference between the best that is possible within a given situation and an ideal state.

*A dynamic, interactive, and continuous process. Although it can be facilitated by episodic studies of more formal nature, such studies don't constitute the whole of evaluation.

*Comprised of a variety of evaluative activities which can aid in program evaluation and decision making; examination of results; use of advisory and steering committees, comprehensive reviews, experimental research management information systems, PERT, etc.

*Dealing with political realities both within and without the educational system.

*Concerned with the people interactions necessary for decisions to be carried out.

*Defining what constitutes "good" education and "successful"educators.

*Establishing criteria on which education in total and the contributions of the various parts of the system are judged.

*Dealing with questions and challenges posed by citizen groups and the general public.

*Concerned with the impact that participating in education has upon students, families, communities, and society.

*A function of administration and program management. It must be done within those roles.

The above statements are bits and pieces seen in the mirror darkly. All deal with something that is evaluative and something that is more than the traditional concept of evaluation.

How does one take a generic process like program evaluation which can encompass many activities and compress it into a short definition? As a start try the following.

Program evaluation is the process by which criteria and evidence are used in forming judgements about programs, alternative programs, and alternatives within programs and the programming system, as a means of facilitating key decisions about education.

Program evaluation is a process by which evidence, criteria, and judgement are used in managing resources and facilitating accurate and appropriate decision making in areas of major importance about education.

These two definitions are posed as examples and as stimuli to you in formulating a definition of what program evaluation is as you view it within the administrative context. Such definitions are needed both by the field as a whole, and by you in your own situation.

A Concept for Administrators

Evaluation which emphasizes decision making and management of resources which goes beyond the decisions that control specific teacher-student interactions is an administrative rather than instructional or research concept. In this concept of evaluation the administrator is the key actor. He must:

*Set the philosophy of program evaluation which prevails within the system and the climate of security within which it operates.

*Identify the kinds of decisions that need to be made and the nature of the evaluations inherent in those decisions.

*Establish criteria for distinguishing among alternatives and for judging the functioning and results of the educational system.

*Know how to judge the limitations of evidence that is easily at hand.

*Know when to invest resources in extensive evidence collection.

*Know how to use data once it is at hand.

*Be able to understand and influence and utilize the evaluations made by others, school board members, public groups, etc.

*Be able to effectively lead his staff in getting the kinds of evaluation done which improve decision making and as a result improve programs.

Program evaluation has potential for being an important tool in day-to-day operations and in times of major debate, crises, or setting new directions. However, much yet needs to be done to shape the tool to practical application.

Issues and Needs for Further Development

First,

*Administrators need to decide whether the phenomena I have sketched and labeled as program evaluation actually is something that is real and important to them. This paper can be seen as presenting a hypothesis that needs to be tested. Perhaps administrators don't need any help with decision making or recognize that there is an evaluative component in decision making.

If there is merit in pursuing a concept of program evaluation in education,

then,

*Alternative definitions of program evaluation need to be debated.

*Component parts need to be identified. Currently some concepts describe elements within a system--personnel, facilities, etc; others focus on stages; others on decision categories. All probably fit well within the oncept of program evaluation, but how do they fit needs to be identified?

*Parameters of the concept need to be tentatively set and then debated.

Then, assuming that the definitions do emphasize the real-life dynamics of managing educational decisions, there may need to be further development of procedures for:

*Describing and guiding how evaluation functions within the dynamics process of decision making.

*Describing and improving the nature of human judgement.

*Evaluating needs and setting priorities.

*Judging the limitations of evidence and the consequences apt to be caused if the data are faulty.

*Efficiently using data, or for realistically judging what scientifically handled data (research type studies, computer information system outputs, etc.) are worth their cost.

*Debating and selected criteria to be used in key decision situations; procedures for translating conceptual criteria into realistic guides.

*Assessing the worth of conflicting values and positions taken based on those values.

*Making processes of interacting with people in judging alternatives and reaching decisions more efficient and less frustrating.

The items above are examples to stimulate your thinking. What evaluative inputs do administrators really need to help them with decision making?

Challenge to Administrators

I'm not sure that I'm talking to administrators. I have a hunch that you are probably much more apt to be either professors and researchers or technical support staff. However, on the chance that there are some administrators here, I would suggest that it is time that you begin formulating concepts of program evaluation which meet the practical tests of time and of day-to-day activity. You have handed conceptualization and implementation of evaluation over to outside experts a bit too willingly. If you are going to get a tool that really works for you, you have to become a partner at the drawing board. You will have to take the leadership in promoting the development and improvement of concepts of program evaluation.

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